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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was administered to 356 teachers and administrators enrolled in graduate courses at Northern Illinois University. The participants were divided into four age groups: 18-26, 27-33, 34-40, and over 40. The questionnaire investigated attitudes concerning the initiation of classroom discipline, effective methods for classroom discipline, and the effect of class structure on discipline. It was found that participants over 40 years of age are more liberal in many views concerning discipline than participants under 27 years of age. It was suggested that better classroom discipline will result from a) the principal's support of the teacher's view of a reasonable classroom, b) parent-teacher conferences concerning children with discipline problems, c) the establishment of discipline rules in the first few days of class, and d) a variation of teaching methods in the maintenance of discipline. It was also found that class structure was not effective in the maintenance of classroom discipline. (BRB)

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DISCIPLINE

Are Older Teachers More Liberal Than Younger Ones?

This article is based upon the viewpoints, opinions, and philosophies of teachers and administrators in the Northern section of Illinois. The information was gathered by administration of a questionnaire concerning discipline.

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DISCIPLINE

Are Older Teachers More Liberal Than Younger Ones?

What do teachers believe about: initiating classroom discipline, effective methods for classroom discipline, and how does class structure affect discipline? To determine answers to these questions a questionnaire was given to 356 teachers and administrators who were enrolled in graduate classes at Northern Illinois University. There were 192 men and 164 women. The age levels were as follows: age 18-26 (n of 160), age 27-33 (n of 101), age 34-40 (n of 52), and over 40 (n of 43). Educators were asked to respond to each question with strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree.

As educators responded to the questionnaire discipline was defined as maintenance of conditions conducive to the efficient achievement of the school's functions within the classroom. Concerning the initiating of classroom discipline the educators indicated the following beliefs.

The first days of class and the rules set by the teacher to the students determine classroom discipline, on this statement teachers and administrators scored an "agree" to "strongly agree." A teacher who varies his teaching methods is more effective than a teacher who uses the same teaching techniques (all things being equal), this question found male and female groups "agree" on this opinion. Teachers and administrators over 40 "agree" more strongly than any other age group of the importance of an instructor varying his teaching style to be effective in his classroom management. On definite daily stated lesson being essential to maintaining classroom management, teachers aged 33 and over tend to "agree," whereas teachers 22-32 are "neutral" to this statement. This result was significant to the .05 level. A teacher's personal appearance affects class discipline three out of four teachers and administrators "agree," whereas one out of four is "neutral" on a teacher's personal dress affecting discipline. Interestingly, teachers 27-33 "agree" solidly as an age group on this question. Teachers addressing students by first name or last name have fewer disciplinary problems than teachers who address students by saying, "Hey you, Shut up," elicited from administrators and female teachers a "strongly agree." Teachers 33 and over "agree" more strongly than younger teachers who just "agree" to the above statement. This is significant at the .05 level.

So far, we have looked at a teacher directed class situation, what about the students?

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To the idea secondary school students (grades 9-12) can set up "just" classroom rules which both the educator and students can abide by during the school year to the .05 level of significance more female teachers "agree" than are "neutral" whereas male teachers are divided between an "agree" to "neutral" answer.

Perhaps teachers were recognizing that students are different when they responded in a "neutral" manner to the tenet treating all students equally in class is a teaching method to be used in classroom discipline.

Eight procedures for effective classroom discipline were explored. To the practice of speaking to a student in private after class as the best teaching method to be used for classroom discipline teachers over the age of forty "agree" on this issue whereas both female and male teachers below this age group score an "agree" to more than are "neutral" response with the lowest group mean being for teachers aged 27-33. Overall, teachers tend to "agree" on speaking to a student in private as the best disciplinarian tact on the part of the educator.

Why would younger teachers tend to be "neutral" toward embarrassing a pupil in class as the least effective teaching method in classroom management? Teachers over 33 "agree" with this statement. This was significant to the .01 level: Concerning corporal punishment as a means of discipline, male teachers and administrators responded to a position of more "neutral" than "disagree" whereas their female

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counterparts "disagree" to "neutral" on a three to one ratio favoring the use of corporal punishment. To the suggestion additional homework is to be used as class discipline all groups "disagree" in the use of additional homework as a means of punishment. Downgrading (changing a student's grade from B to C) is an effective teaching method to enforce classroom management was also rejected by all groups. The reaction to detention after school for classroom discipline found male teachers "neutral" to slightly "agree", whereas female teachers were less "neutral" to slightly "disagree." Teachers over forty were divided between a "neutral" to "disagree" position on detention in comparison to teachers 22-26 who were "neutral" to slightly "agree." This was significant at the .01 level.

The entire sample tended to "agree" more strongly than were "neutral" toward the trend of regular teacher-parent conferences to improve classroom management. The same teachers and administrators agreed that all teachers and administrators should maintain written reports when meeting with parents to discuss discipline problems.

The specification that the principal's support of a teacher's "reasonable" class discipline is vital to the maintenance of school discipline and staff morale found the strongest support and closest consensus of opinions of any statement on the questionnaire. Teachers and administrators split their answers between "strongly agree" and "agree" indicating the principal's support of his faculty's class

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discipline as absolutely essential to both school discipline and high morale among a teaching staff.

Class structure per se does not affect discipline was the general consensus of the group. To the proposal a non-graded school, where students elect their own academic courses, will help alleviate school room discipline problems the teachers reacted in a "neutral-slightly agree" response. Teachers over forty were almost evenly divided between a "neutral" and "agree" position. Teachers and administrators did not concur with the statement flexible scheduling is more effective in facilitating classroom discipline than a regular forty to forty-five minute class period. Their responses were "neutral-slightly agree" tending toward "neutral". For students grouped in a circle or around a big circular table versus fixed rows lessens classroom discipline problems; homogeneous grouping and heterogeneous groupings, as well as subject matter affects school discipline all received "neutral" votes.

Summary

In this study several important indications were voiced. In this sample the teachers over forty were more liberal in many of their views about discipline than were those under twenty-seven. Suggestions for better discipline follow.

1. The principal's support of a teacher's reasonable classroom discipline is vital to the maintenance of school discipline.

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2. Parent-teacher conferences concerning children with discipline problems are helpful and to these conferences teachers and administrators should bring written reports of the child's behavior.
3. The first few days of the class are important; teacher rules or students rules can be set and understood.
4. A teacher who varies his teaching methods is more effective than a teacher who uses the same teaching techniques (all things being equal) in maintaining classroom discipline.
5. Talking to a pupil after class about his behavior is an acceptable manner of discipline.
6. Embarrassing a student in class is the least effective teaching method in classroom discipline.
7. Additional homework, detention after school and downgrading were all thought of as ineffective means for controlling classroom discipline.
8. Class structure per se is not the key to better discipline.
9. Teachers should know the student's names and address them by name.
10. Three out of four teachers believed that personal appearance affects class discipline.

(the end)